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ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of Poland

Paper submitted by Poland**

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1. In Poland, two commissions are entrusted with establishing geographical names:

(a) The Commission for Establishing Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects, acts within the Council of Ministers Office and is entrusted with domestic names;

(b) The Commission for Standardization of Geographical Names outside Poland, acts within the Ministry of National Education and is entrusted with world names.

2. The Commission for Establishing Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects establishes the names of independent settlement units, i.e. towns and villages, and their parts (estates, hamlets and parts of towns and villages) as well as the names of such physiographical objects as rivers, lakes, mountains, uplands, lowlands, national parks.

3. The Commission comprises 16 persons: linguists, historians, geographers, cartographers, representatives of the central administration viz. the Council of Ministers Office, Communications Ministry, Transport Ministry, National Defence Ministry, the Main Statistical Office, as well as the national geodetic and cartographic service. The Commission meets four to five times a year. The Commission's constant purpose is to deliver opinions on applications to change place-names.

4. Under Polish administrative regulations, the residents of a given village apply for a change in its name. Such a motion must be supported by at least half the residents who enjoy the franchise. The heads of the commune and of the province (voivode) must next express their opinions. The Commission reviews the application only on a motion by the voivode. It takes into consideration primarily historical data, concordance with language correctness norms, also nationalistic and denominational factors. The Commission presents its opinion on changing a place-name to the Head of the Council of Ministers Office who then gives it official confirmation. It becomes legally binding after the relative ordinance appears in the Monitor Polski (government gazette). The Commission reviews several such applications every year.

5. The following issues were dealt with by the Commission between 1987 and 1992:

(a) Establishment of names of nature reserves and national parks. In recent years many nature reserves and landscape parks have been created in Poland, and names had to be decided on for them. The Commission suggested principles for creating nature reserve names as guidelines for appropriate administrative bodies. In the Commission's opinion, nature reserve names should be created mainly from the names of physiographical objects and localities within the given region. The creation of new names should be avoided;

(b) Establishment of names of localities and physiographical names for a gazetteer. In 1990 the Commission concluded its work on establishing the linguistic forms for the needs of a Polish gazetteer;

(c) Establishment of river and mountain streams on the Polish and Czech and Slovak border region. Some 200 hydronyms were set;

(d) Verification of the list of place-names.

6. A list of official place-names in Poland was published between 1980 and 1982 by the erstwhile Ministry of Administration and Main Statistical Office in collaboration with the Commission. The list presented place-names (nominative, genitive), type of place (town, village, section of village, estate, hamlet, city, district), administrative affiliation (commune, province), post office and railway station (halt). The list comprises upwards of 100,000 place-names. This list is an official document which has been affirmed by an appropriate ordinance of the Ministry of Administration.

7. A general census was held in Poland in 1989, during which place-names throughout the country were verified. The Office of the Council of Ministers received a list of several hundred divergences between the forms of names in the list of official names and those in general local usage. The Commission studied these divergences, rechecked the names on the spot and took decisions on the disputed names. Work was concluded in 1991 on verifying the place-names for the second edition on the list of official place-names in Poland.

8. The Commission for Standardization of Geographical Names outside Poland, acting within the Ministry of National Education, was appointed in its present composition on 11 October 1987. It comprises 17 persons: geographers, cartographers, linguists from the Polish Academy of Sciences and Warsaw University, interested publishing houses, the national geodetic and cartographic service, the Polish Military General Staff, the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Ministry of National Education and the Institute of Foreign Affairs. In the period between the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in August 1987, and May 1992, the Commission held seven plenary meetings during which it was mainly preoccupied with setting some 1,600 Polish exonyms for Europe, outside the territory of the former USSR. A list of these exonyms has been prepared. It contains the names of states, lands and localities in alphabetic order, according to political division, and lists separately hydronyms (maritime regions, inland-water objects etc.) and oronyms according to physical and geographical regional division in hierarchic order. Polish names on the border regions of Bohemia and Slovakia (Slask, Spisz, Orava), which are partly inhabited by Polish-speaking persons have been presented separately, as have Polish names in the Svalbard archipelago of Norway which were given by Polish explorers. The papers presented to the plenary meetings were drafted by a four-person working group of the Commission members, since it does not employ paid staff.

9. Polish exonyms for Africa, North America and South America are currently being elaborated. Once work on establishing exonyms for the remaining parts of the world is concluded, the publication of a volume "Polish World Place Names" is planned. Professor Jerzy Kondracki, the Commission chairman, participated in the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held in Geneva in 1989 and 1991 and, in 1989, published United Nations materials on the standardization of geographical names in Polish (World Cartography, vol. XVIII).

10. Two to four Commission members participated in the ninth, tenth and eleventh meetings of the Tenth United Nations Regional Group for East-Central and South-Eastern Europe in Bratislava.

11. The above-mentioned Commissions apart, work on standardizing geographical names is also pursued by the Polish geodetic and cartographic service: up to 1987, by the Main Office for Geodesy and Cartography and presently, by the Department of Geodesy, Cartography and Land Management of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Construction. The national geodetic and cartographic service has initiated and is partly financing a number of jobs stemming from United Nations decisions concerning the standardization of geographical names, to mention but the national gazetteer elaborated and published in 1991 under the title Geographical Names of the Republic of Poland. It contains some 28,000 geographical names on a 1:500,000 map. This gazetteer was presented to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its fifteenth session in November 1991. In 1990 the principles for an IT system of geographical names, based on a 1:10,000 topographical map, were drawn up on a recommendation of the Department of Geodesy, Cartography and Land Management, within the framework of the land information system.

12. A constantly published place-name organ and a data bank of toponymical information are planned to be set up within the framework of the geodetic and cartographic service.